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A discussion of student selection, peer-group influence, and tutelage. Concludes that on the contemporary American scene the effects of student peer groups are sufficiently important to justify the serious attention of social scientists. Evaluates peer-group influence as a potent force which could be exploited to advance an institution's educational objectives.

The author also discusses this subject in a chapter which appears in *The Study of College Peer Groups: Problems and Prospects for Research*, published by the Social Science Research Council in 1961.

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EXPLOITING STUDENT RESOURCES*

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I. THE PROBLEM

Not long ago a group of social scientists met to consider a set of problems which might be summarized in the question, "How can we find out what happens to students in American colleges and universities, and why?" Being social scientists, we soon found ourselves "categorizing" the "sources of variance" in "institutional output." What this really meant was that a comparatively few kinds of things seem to be mainly responsible for the enormous differences that one can observe among students -- within a given college or among many -- as they leave ivied walls and cloistered halls. Emerging students are different, we guessed, because they were different on first coming to college, because they have met different kinds of faculty-administration influence, and because they have done different kinds of things to each other while in college. (These three factors may be labeled selection, tutelage, and peer influence.)

Having categorized the sources of differentiation, we then went on to rank them in terms of presumed importance. Somewhat to our own surprise, we found ourselves virtually unanimous. Selection, we thought (i.e., all the things that students bring with them on arriving at college), more fully accounts for the final product than either of the other sets of factors. Peer influences we rated second. Though most of us were college professors, we had no sense that we were, by assigning these relative weights, necessarily denigrating our own roles as educators. It is possible that selection makes

*Adapted from a chapter in The Study of College Peer Groups: Problems and Prospects for Research, edited by T. M. Newcomb and E. K. Wilson. Social Science Research Council, 1961.

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a difference not just because students on leaving are very much like the same students on entering college; perhaps also--or even instead--selection is important because some student characteristics, already present on entrance, make their possessors more likely to become different--in which case professors may provide the necessary mechanisms of change. As to our second-rated set of factors, peer influence is not necessarily opposed to faculty influence; it is at least possible that the latter is mediated and reinforced by the former--in which case, again, the professor's role is essential even if not sufficient.

Whatever the facts of the matter, there is reason enough to conclude that on the contemporary American scene the effects of student peer groups are sufficiently important to justify the serious attention of social scientists. Everyday observation, theoretical expectation, and empirical investigation all point to their importance.

II. THEORY AND EVIDENCE

The theoretical basis for assuming that peer group effects should be rather considerable are not particularly abstruse. Essentially, the argument in its general form runs as follows.

People respond to a situation not necessarily as it "really" is but as they perceive it to be. And they perceive all but the simplest situations--especially human ones--not as they have been pre-ordained, by their physiological make-up, to perceive them but as they have learned to do so. The matter of learning to perceive--of acquiring habits of perceiving in one way things that might be (and often are, by other people) perceived differently, is a very complex one indeed, but nearly all psychologists would agree that such habits are learned as a result of the successes and failures that follow from actions based upon "right" and "wrong" ways of perceiving situations. The notions of success and failure assume, of course, that individuals have motives--whether standard, universal ones or idiosyncratic ones--in terms of which success and failure are experienced.

There are powerful reasons why groups have much to do with individuals' successes and failures, and thus with the kinds of perceptual habits that they acquire. This is true, first, because groups so often have it in their power to reward and to punish--as by applause or shame, or by the according or withholding of social status or of

worldly goods. Group standards often seem arbitrary to members of other groups--and indeed they are and must be, in the literal sense, for in many areas of life it is the fact of consensuality, not its content, that matters. One needs to know, dependably and in advance, what kinds of behavior will and will not be rewarded. Such standards come to have the psychological impact of ineluctability, and are sometimes referred to as "social reality."

Successes and failures are matters of group life, second, because human beings want and need each other. (Perhaps I should add that groups may be small as well as large, informal as well as formal; a pair of lovers, for example, constitutes a group in almost every important sense of the term.) If we want and need other people, then their responses to us are potentially rewarding or punishing--regardless of whether our wants represent spontaneous affiliativeness or the calculated instrumental use of others. In either case, group members develop sets of consensual expectations about each other (e.g., husband, wife, and child all want and expect husband-like, wife-like, and child-like behavior from the appropriate family members, as well as wanting and expecting certain similar, rather than differentiated, behaviors from all).

For the purposes of the present argument, the outcomes of these two bases of group power over its individual members are the same: individual members develop attitudes toward each other--most commonly favorable ones;* and they develop consensual sets of expectations regarding each others' behavior and regarding important aspects of their common environment, by which their individual expectations of success and failure are guided. Such consensual expectations of each others' behavior are known as norms. Baldly put, groups have power over their members because the same processes of interaction that result in members' feeling favorably toward each other also result, simultaneously, in their adopting norms that enable them to aim at success rather than failure.

The final step of the argument, of course, is that student peer groups, as a special case of a general phenomenon, are subject to the

*The prevalence of favorable over unfavorable interpersonal attitudes, as outcomes of interaction, is by no means limited to voluntarily associating group members; witness the very common fact that most parents and children, the world around, have predominantly favorable attitudes toward one another, though they had nothing to do with choosing each other in the first place. Professor George Homans' observation (1950) that interaction and interpersonal attraction tend to increase together is, in general terms, a very dependable one.

general rules. A plausible case can in fact be made for the assumption that the general rules should apply *a fortiori* to student groups. College students (particularly in this country, perhaps) meet each other with a ready-made consensuality compounded of needs for independence from parents in a setting where independence is relatively possible, and of strivings for adult status in a world that treats them half as children. These initial bases of consensus, together with the fact that students are inevitably thrown together in dining rooms, classes, and dormitories, inevitably result--and often rather quickly--in the joint processes according to which groups acquire power over their members.

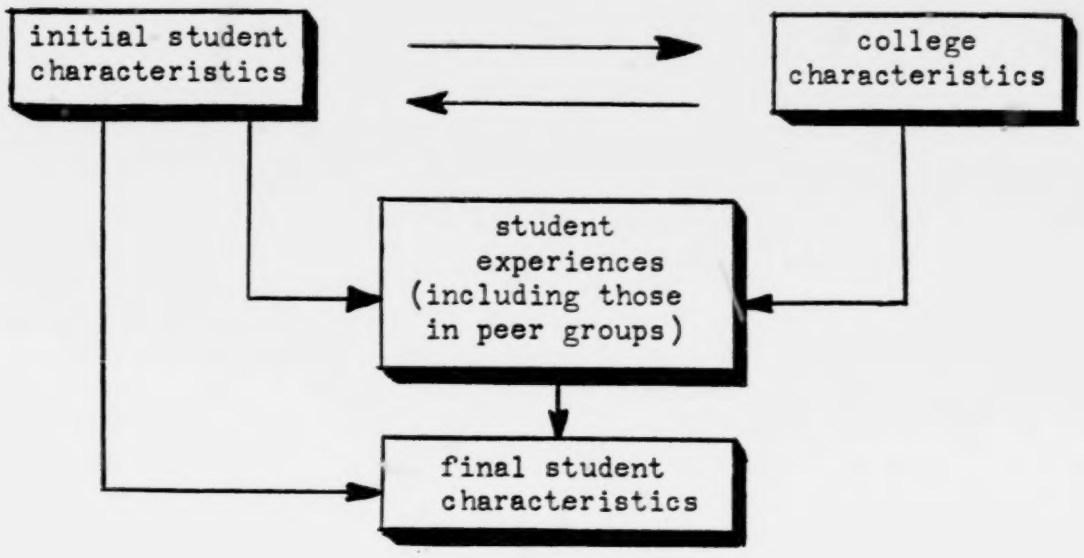
The empirical grounds for concluding that substantial peer group effects *in fact* occur in contemporary American colleges are not as solid as many of us would like to believe. Within the bounds of student peer group studies, the following conclusions seem justified. (1) Under certain conditions (as noted later) there have been several demonstrations of marked changes in attitude, of consensual nature, during college or professional-school years. (Cf. Jacob, 1957; Newcomb, 1943; Sanford *et al*, 1956; Merton *et al*, 1957.) (2) A much larger set of studies fails to show any such changes (see, in particular, Jacob's review, 1957). Almost without exception, however, these studies have made no attempt to study differentiated peer groups. Their data have generally come from samples (more rarely, whole populations) of certain college classes, with no attention to group membership beyond the assumption that entire classes, or even entire student bodies, constitute membership groups. (3) Many and probably most of this larger body of studies have, quite understandably, concentrated upon the kinds of attitude changes that educators consider desirable. As an educator, I consider it deplorable that some of the kinds of changes that I think should be occurring in contemporary American colleges are not, apparently, occurring. This conclusion--if it be justified--is, however, almost irrelevant to the question of the nature and extent of college peer group influences. Here, as elsewhere, the week-day job of social scientists is to discover and to understand what is in fact going on, leaving till Sundays and holidays the delights of personal evaluation.

In sum, I believe that the theoretical reasons for expecting important peer group effects within American colleges are very convincing, and that the expectations have been well supported when they have been put to the proper tests. I shall use much of the remainder of this paper to suggest certain conditions of peer group influence that have emerged, or hypothetically would emerge, from such "proper tests."

III. A FRAMEWORK

It often happens, particularly in the world of human affairs, that the consequences of any event are more fully understood if viewed in the light of the circumstances, of which that event itself is a consequence, than by viewing the event as "uncaused" (though for many purposes this procedure is unnecessary or even impossible). The study of peer groups is a case in point: peer group formation is an outcome of antecedent events; the nature of members' experiences, and thus the effects of those experiences, may be profoundly influenced by the circumstances attending the group's emergence. And so (in the language of contemporary social scientists) it is necessary to consider peer groups, alternately, as dependent and as independent phenomena.

I may as well warn the reader in advance that there are yet other complexities in store for him. There are "interaction effects" all over the place. That is, the nature of student peer group experience is sure to be influenced by the various factors categorized as selective, and these in turn are influenced by and (in time) they also influence both the actual and the perceived nature of the college itself. In very direct ways, furthermore, various kinds of institutional arrangements--e.g., student living arrangements--influence peer group formation. The following schematic diagram, in which arrows indicate presumed directions of influence, will suggest the kinds of interaction effects which must be taken into account.



SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING INTERDEPENDENT INFLUENCES UPON FINAL STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The diagram suggests the framework within which I shall examine some student peer group effects. Within such a framework, at the heart of which is "student experiences" and in particular peer group experiences, I shall look into the question of how peer group membership influences the college product.

IV. SOME CONDITIONS OF PEER GROUP FORMATION

It is of course "natural" for people with common interests to associate with one another, and it is a truism that, in our own society at least, not only early but also late adolescents (including most college students) seem to have strong needs for acceptance by age and sex peers. The truism leaves unexplained, however, the entire matter of selection. Even in very small colleges, not every one associates with equal frequency or with equal intensity with all of his peers. There are, moreover, wide differences among individuals; some are under- and some over-involved, in terms of local norms. Furthermore, there are many possible bases for peer group formation, ranging from chance propinquity through more or less casual common interests to shared concerns of great moment. And so, in order to gain our primary objective of understanding the effects of peer group experience, we must examine such specific questions as why it is that particular peer groups get formed in the first place. I am, of course, making the social scientist's usual assumption that things happen in orderly rather than in "uncaused" ways, and that, in any college community at any given time, if certain conditions had been different the consequences for peer group formation would have been different.

Three kinds of factors may be considered of primary importance as independent--i.e., as contributing to the formation of particular peer groups.

Pre-college acquaintance. Particularly during early college experience, previous acquaintance, especially as established in secondary schools, may form the basis of college peer groups. One study of high school seniors' preferences among colleges (Coleman and Rossi, 1960) found that a small proportion of high school friends hoped to attend the same college. Neither this study nor any other known to me, however, provides much information as to the subsequent fate of pre-college friendships. It seems probable that many if not most of them are superseded by others developed in college with previously unknown persons. In the presumably rare cases where they do persist through a significant proportion of the college years, it seems more likely that they reinforce existing attitudes and values of the individuals involved than that they mediate new ones acquired through college experience.

Propinquity. One cannot very well develop peer group relationships with persons whom one has never met. Neither does one develop them with all of the persons whom one has met. But propinquity determines the probability of any two persons' meeting and, in particular, early

propinquity in college--when most other individuals are relatively indistinguishable, since most of them are strangers--determines the probability of early meeting. This basic statement of statistical probabilities, together with a rather basic psychological consideration, has important consequences for peer group formation. This consideration, somewhat oversimply, is that a currently known source of reward is not likely to be valued less than an alternative whose reward value is less certain. (Cf. G. Murphy, 1947, on "canalization.") Existing sources of reward enjoy a kind of squatter's right, and peer group acceptance is likely to be rewarding. This principle, the consequences of which are in a certain sense conservative, must of course compete with other and sometimes overriding principles, and therefore describes a probable rather than a required state of affairs. But the two kinds of probabilities, together, result in a considerably-greater-than-chance frequency of persisting peer group relationships that originated in "chance" encounters facilitated by propinquity, as in dormitory residence or classroom attendance.

In view of the fact that marriage rates--even within a single city--vary directly with residential propinquity of marriage partners, (Cf. Bosaard, 1932), we should scarcely expect that the formation of less intimate peer group relationships would be immune to the same considerations, and the known facts support the expectation. Festinger et al (1950) for example, have shown that in a housing project for married students the closest interpersonal relationships (in a statistical sense) developed not merely on the part of those whose apartment entrances faced the same court, but also, in particular, among those who used the same stairways and other facilities. A more recent investigation (Newcomb, 1960) shows that, even within a small, two-floor house accommodating only 17 students, there were significantly more close relationships among the eight men on one floor and among the nine men on the other than between men on the different floors, after several months of acquaintance. Roommates, whose proximity to each other was greatest of all, were particularly prone to develop close relationships.*

Insofar as we are interested in the study of formal peer groups (which are much easier to identify than informal ones), it seems clear, from these and other findings, that they are likely to be found wherever local arrangements--of living, dining, studying, engaging in student activities--result in very frequent associations among a given group of

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*The finding concerning same-floor and different-floor relationships holds even when roommates, whose relationships were generally close, were excluded from consideration.... It should be added that all of these 17 men were total strangers to each other on entering the house, and they had nothing at all to do with the choice of their own roommates.

students. Not all of those whose associations with each other are frequent will necessarily be subject--and certainly not in equal degrees--to the effects of the norms that inevitably develop under such conditions, but a large proportion of those who are influenced by such norms can probably be thus discovered.

Similarity of attitudes and interests. Birds of a feather do flock together, and the kind of feathering that seems to be most essential for the human species is clearly marked by common interests. This truism both rests upon and illustrates some crucial principles concerning human interaction. People are most likely to interact--and thus, in terms of probabilities, to develop close relationships--when shared interest in some aspect of their common environment brings them together. The earlier principle that interaction tends to create consensual attitudes should not obscure the equally important one that interaction tends to begin on the basis of existing interests that are shared. The two principles, together, imply that interaction may lead to new (and often widening) kinds of shared interests.

Contiguity and common interests (or at least assumed common) together would seem to account for the beginning of most peer group relationships. An initial basis may of course be provided by the common features of the shared environment, but the selective association that commonly occurs within large groups, all of whose members have this initial basis, is likely to be based upon shared interests that are not inherent in the immediate situation--like preferred sports, hobbies, or tastes in music or sex partners. In my own study of the process of acquaintance on the part of small populations of college men, common interests in sports or college majors often served as a basis for early clique formation, but these did not necessarily persist; changes tended to occur with further opportunity to explore each others' interests. Closeness of interpersonal relationships after four months of acquaintance was in many (though not all) cases determined more by sharing of general values (religious, perhaps, or aesthetic) than by more specific interests held in common.

The common interests that are so essential to the formation of peer groups may or may not extend beyond those which students bring with them to college, or beyond those which they share with their contemporaries outside of college. If not, the consequences of membership in such groups may be quite unrelated--or even opposed--to the distinctive objectives of higher education, as commonly assumed by educators. I suppose no one really knows how generally it is true that peer group effects are essentially irrelevant, in this sense, on the contemporary American scene. In the following section I shall discuss some of the conditions under which such irrelevant outcomes most probably occur.

Meanwhile, to pursue the question of how common interests contribute to the formation of student peer groups, it is well to remember that the interests of groups, like those of individuals, may change. There is a

well-known principle in psychology according to which motives initially instrumental to the gratification of some other, overriding motive may take on a life of their own, independently of the goal to which it was at first subsidiary.* Means often become ends. An analogous principle may be applied to groups. A group already characterized by consensuality of interests and attitudes, and by interpersonal attitudes that are favorable, may persist as a group on the basis of the latter set of attitudes even though the former set has become dissipated. A group that has acquired considerable interpersonal solidarity may prove to be autonomous, in this sense, but it does not follow that a subsequent basis of consensuality can be dispensed with entirely. If the originally common interests have disappeared, they tend to be replaced by others, or if not interpersonal solidarity is likely to decline, leaving nothing to hold the group together. The social psychological fact seems to be that group continuity is fostered by high levels of consensuality of both of two kinds: *favorable attitudes toward each other, and similar* attitudes toward things of common importance--though most groups can tolerate less than a perfectly solid front.

In any case, the educator who despairs at the irrelevancies of student peer group influences may take heart over the fact that yesterday's poisonous irrelevancy may, in the same group, become today's relevant meat. He may even anticipate that, as students reassort themselves, old groups giving way to new, some of the emerging groups will form around his favorite relevancies. He may, infact, regard such possibilities as special challenges to his educational skills.

V. SOME CONDITIONS OF PEER GROUP INFLUENCE

As I have already tried to show, it is students' attitudes--rather than their general skills, or specific capacities, or basic personality characteristics--that are most likely to be directly influenced by peer group membership. Let me first indicate a little more clearly what I mean by that term and then point to some conditions under which attitudinal effects are most likely to take place.

Attitudes, as social psychologists commonly use the term, refer to the ways in which an individual has learned to assess things with which he is more or less familiar. "Things" include any entity--cabbages or kings or concepts--that he recognizes and distinguishes from other entities. Assessment refers both to the qualities that he attributes to the thing in question and to his evaluation of it, in view of these qualities--evaluates, that is, in ways like liking, fearing, approving, or their opposities. We generally think of attitudes as varying in intensity, or strength, in sign (favorable vs. unfavorable), and in generality (i.e., the inclusiveness of the entity to which they refer;

*Among various formulations of this principle, that of Professor G.W. Allport (1937) has perhaps been most influential; he uses the term "functional autonomy."

one may have attitudes toward a specific man, toward men in general, or toward human beings in general). We often refer to highly generalized attitudes, especially toward non-concrete entities, as values.

Insofar as groups have power over their members, I have argued, it is because two processes tend to occur together, as group members continue to interact. Members become more favorably disposed to each other, and they come to adopt as their own certain group-shared attitudes, or norms, and to feel that those norms are right and proper. Both of these consequences (placing a measure of trust in others, and accepting their assessment of things) involve, in important ways, the yielding of power over oneself to others. But it is the second--which I have described as the sharing in group norms--that is of primary interest as an outcome of educational experience.

The import of these considerations seems to me to be as follows. Insofar as we are interested in what college experience does to students' attitudes we must, because of the nature of attitude formation and change, be interested in the groups to which students (wittingly or not) yield power over their own attitudes. Most attitudes--and particularly those in which educators are interested--are, as social psychologists like to say, anchored in group membership. This statement, let me hasten to add, in no way represents an advocacy of conformity, as opposed to personal independence and critical-mindedness. The latter represents a kind of value (highly prized by most social psychologists, incidentally) which, like most others, is nourished by group support, however narrowly selective. The assertion that, as a matter of empirical observation, values and other kinds of attitudes are nourished and even created via group membership carries no implication that any given instance of the general phenomenon is to be applauded or decried.

Insofar as the propostition is correct, however, it is heavy with implications for educators: How can we direct such kinds of influences in accordance with--rather than irrelevantly or in opposition to--our educational objectives? This question is really a double-headed one. It invites both scientific and "applied" replies--i.e., both statements of conditions under which the presumed effects are most likely to occur and prescriptions for creating those conditions. I shall touch only lightly on the latter.

At least four conditions that facilitate student peer groups' influence upon their members' attitudes appear to be well enough established to deserve mention. No one of them is an essential condition; perhaps any single one of them, under exactly the right circumstances, might prove effective in the absence of all of the others. Most commonly, however, several or all of these conditions exist together when marked effects have been noted.

Perhaps the most obvious of these conditions has to do with group size. Membership in very large populations is not likely of itself, to bring about the strong interpersonal attitudes that are so important an ingredient in peer group effects upon attitudes. Small groups, in which such interpersonal relationships can be established, often mediate the attitudes for which a larger population (like "the college") stands, but membership in the latter without the former's mediation would probably not be very effective. From the point of view of formal arrangements which result in group formation, however, relatively large groups have the advantage of making it possible for individuals to be selective in their more intimate associations. From this point of view, the formal group should not be so large that most of its members cannot recognize one another, nor yet so small as to discourage the formation within it of spontaneously formed, congenial subgroups. The combination of strong interpersonal attitudes engendered by the latter, and the strength of support provided by the more inclusive group of which the subgroup is a representative, is often an effective one.*

A second condition involves relative homogeneity of group members. Homogeneity of age, sex, social class, or religious affiliation contributes to effective peer group influence primarily because of the homogeneity of attitudes that tends to go along with such similarities. The more readily observable forms of similarity without their attitudinal counterparts will hardly suffice for the formation of effective groups. The fact that existing homogeneity of attitudes is so important to group solidarity has, of course, implications of conservatism: if group solidarity depends upon the similarity of members' attitudes, its continuing solidarity is likely to be threatened by lessened similarity in those attitudes. But the same fact also provides the possibility of exactly the reverse. As the late Professor Kurt Lewin used to say, apropos of the effectiveness of "group decision" under certain conditions, "it is sometimes easier to change the attitudes of an entire group than of a single individual"--simply because group support may be mobilized for change as well as against it. At any rate, if a group is not relatively homogeneous with regard to some existing attitudes of importance to its members, it will not have much power to change its members' attitudes.

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*Witness, for example, the colleges within Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the Houses as Harvard and Yale, and small colleges like Antioch, Bennington, Reed, at all of which formal arrangements have resulted in groups of a few hundred that have proven capable of arousing effective group loyalties.

A third condition, relative isolation from groups having divergent group norms, is closely related to the second. Either the fact or the illusion of a membership homogeneous in attitudes may serve to strengthen the conviction that those attitudes are "right." It is communicative rather than physical isolation, however, that I have in mind. In a college community which I once studied from the point of view of freshman-to-senior attitude change (1943), I found no students so untouched by the prevalent patterns of decreasing political conservatism as those who, together with tiny groups of close friends, were so insulated from the majority of their fellows that they were quite unaware of the dominant trend that was so conspicuous to others.

Let me add, again, that to point to a condition of group effectiveness is not necessarily to approve of it. But whether one approves or not, there are many institutions of higher education, and many kinds of formal student groups within still more of them, whose policies of admission together with their selective drawing power result both in attitudinal homogeneity and communicative isolation. The effects of the combination are indubitably conservative, and also indubitably effective.

A final facilitating condition for peer group effectiveness is also an obvious one: the importance to individual members of the group-supported attitudes. Other things equal, the greater the importance to them of the attitudes for which the group stands the greater the solidarity of the group, regardless of whether the sense of importance preceded or has been engendered by group membership. Again, the implications appear to be conservative, but again they are not necessarily so. It does not necessarily follow, from the fact that group members feel that something is very important, that existing attitudes (even consensual ones) toward it are immutable. It may follow, from the same fact, that its very importance requires accurate assessment of it, and group power may be mobilized toward recognizing new facts or widened perspectives from which changed attitudes follow. If so, the same group influence which previously resisted change now comes to support it.

In sum, groups become more effective influencers of their members under some sets of conditions than under others. The effective combinations of conditions are not infrequently present in contemporary American colleges, whether or not by design of their educational architects. Very often, too, they are not met--and perhaps fortunately so. The educator's objective is not necessarily that of maximizing peer group influence, but rather that of understanding how, when, and why it occurs in order that its effects may be consonant with his purposes.

VI. PEER GROUP INFLUENCE AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

I began by mentioning three categories of determinants of our student products: selection, tutelage, and peer influence. Let me now return to these, in somewhat different fashion, by posing this question: How can peer group influence be so directed as to further educational objectives?

It would be folly, I submit, to attempt to plan the effects of any one of the three categories while ignoring the other two. After all, every student is simultaneously influenced by all three, and their effects are presumably interdependent. I shall therefore ask some questions--most of which are beyond my power to answer--about how we might, by taking thought, so plan our procedures of selection and of tutelage that their effects, conjointly with those of peer group influence, might come closer to our hearts' desires.

Let's begin with selection. Selection <u>for</u> <u>what</u>? This is quite a different question from the one that is mostly commonly asked, I believe: selection <u>of</u> <u>what</u>? I'm really not very knowledgeable about what is probably a wide range of selection procedures in different kinds of colleges, but I have the impression that there is a good deal of competition to attract what is essentially one kind of student--the bright kind. Frankly, I like bright students; I prefer them to dull ones, and I've never found a colleague who didn't feel the same way about it. No wonder that we find a mad scramble for bright students: even though different colleges presumably have quite different educational objectives, their teachers have a single scale for evaluating students. If, for example, Harvard, Cal Tech, and Swarthmore all have identical objectives, then I suppose it is proper that they should employ identical selective procedures. I suspect, however, that their stated objectives vary a good deal more than their selection.

The basic difference between the questions "selection <u>for</u> what?" and "selection <u>of</u> what?" is this, I think. The latter refers to what students have already got, while the former refers also to what they might achieve. (It's perfectly true, of course, that what they've already got is the best single predictor we have as to their future achievement. But we all know that it isn't a good enough predictor, <u>even</u> <u>if</u> all colleges had the same objectives.) Pursuing this distinction a little further, I think the "of what" criterion tends to carry the implication that if we can only select students who are bright enough then their subsequent achievement will be satisfactory <u>almost</u> <u>regardless</u> of what happens to them in college. (I have, in fact, heard many college teachers say exactly this--and they aren't trying to be cynical, either.) And this brings me back to my central theme of peer group influence. If it's true that such influence is relatively powerful, then it refers to important effects that occur <u>in</u> <u>college</u> and that are <u>not</u> predetermined by pre-college brightness.

I am trying to make the points that things that happen in college can be important; that among these things peer group effects can be particularly so; and that selection has something to do with whether peer group effects contribute to educational objectives. Before I get more specific about this, let me add that the third category, tutelage, also has something to do with it, and that I include in this category certain kinds of administrative arrangements. There are two things, primarily, that I would ask of academic-administrative tutelage if desirable kinds of peer group influence are to be fostered: that students have some exciting experiences during their academic pursuits, and that they share such experiences with peers whom they know well enough to have shared many other kinds of important experiences with them. If academic and intellectual excitement is introduced into the common experience of peer groups, all their power and influence can be brought to bear upon academic and intellectual concerns.

The kinds of administrative arrangements that are likely to have such results are not difficult to describe, though they may not be so easy to provide. Many small colleges of a generation or two ago provided them, quite unwittingly. They are such that each individual student finds himself in a human environment that includes persons whom he knows, likes, trusts, and with whom he shares the daily round of intellectual life for the same reasons that he shares with them the daily round of fun, food, and bull sessions. If a group of students who know and like each other and see each other often and informally also have the common experiences of being excited, worried, puzzled, and active about books and professors and laboratories and ideas--then their peer group potential is being directed toward educational objectives, whether they know it or not...I shall not give you any prescription for making these things happen; I want only to say that they happen not capriciously but because certain combinations of conditions invite them to happen. The inviting conditions are probably harder to arrange in large universities and commuting colleges than in small, residential colleges, but even in the former I consider them only difficult, not impossible.

Now let me return to questions of selecting students. For present purposes, there are two criteria to bear in mind: the exploitation of peer group resources, and student development toward whatever the college's educational objectives are. As to the latter, suppose that a college's objectives are the very general ones of widening student's horizons and providing an environment in which each of them can discover where his talents--great or small--can best be applied. In that case, it seems to me, we should not prescribe a high cutting-point on test scores; rather, we should ask researchers like those at the Berkeley Center for the Study of Higher Education to find out for us what are the best predictors of ability to profit by exploratory experience. But if, on the other hand, our objectives are to provide professional or preprofessional training for those who think they have already assessed their own talents, then what we need is good predictors of success in those professional

fields. Or if--as is more commonly the case--we aim at both kinds of objectives, and particularly if we are suspicious of premature professional commitment, then we will want to select different students by different criteria. Whether we apply one criterion or several, we ought in any case to know, quite self-consciously, just what we are doing and why.

And, finally, no matter what our single criterion or combination of them, our policies of selection ought to go hand in hand with our planned arrangements for exploiting peer group influence. Most important of these is the set of conditions that determine which students live and eat and play and study together. Such administratively planned groupings should be large enough to provide two conditions: opportunity to select friends on the basis of personal preferences, and some diversity in interests and maturity. And they should be small enough to provide some measure of group identity--small enough, for example, for each member to know the name of every member of the group. Ideally, it seems to me every incoming student would be selected because his present status indicates that he is suitable in terms of a specified educational objective, and with a specified group assignment which takes this objective into account and which is geared into his curricular assignments.

Such a proffered ideal, like many others, may seem artificial and synthetic--and, even if not, perhaps impossible of achievement. My purpose, however, has been not to present a blueprint, but to illustrate what I think are some basic facts of contemporary American colleges. The social-psychological motors of student life are racing, but for the most part they are dis-engaged from the wheels of development toward our educational objectives. We need some new educational engineering, which takes into account the nature of the power than can be exploited, what we want to do with it, and the kinds of raw material with which we can best begin. Any good engineers around?